



Medicine series

Practice details

# Amitriptyline

- Keep this leaflet safe, as you may need to refer to it again.
- Please ask your vet or veterinary nurse if you have any further questions.
- This medicine has been prescribed for your pet ONLY. Do not take it yourself or give it to another person or any other animal; it may harm them even if their symptoms appear to be the same.

The medicine you have been given for your dog or cat is called amitriptyline. It may have a trade name such as Triptafen® or Triptafen-M®, but often will just be called amitriptyline.

## What is amitriptyline?

Amitriptyline belongs to a group of medicines that are called tricyclic antidepressants. These drugs act on the brain to alter mood and to suppress pain.

## Why has my pet been prescribed amitriptyline?

Amitriptyline can be used to help treat severe anxiety problems in pets. These include separation-related anxiety and compulsive behaviour disorders in dogs. In cats amitriptyline can be used to treat psychogenic alopecia (a condition where cats pull out their own fur), hypervocalization (excessive meowing) and also for certain kinds of urinary disorders. Amitriptyline may also be used to treat some forms of pain in pets.

## How should I store amitriptyline?

This medicine does not require special storage conditions. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

## How do I give amitriptyline tablets to my pet?

Amitriptyline tablets have a bitter taste. Try to disguise them in a small quantity of strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Alternatively, the tablets can be placed carefully on the back of your pet's tongue and their mouth held closed until the entire dose has been swallowed.

## How long will my pet need to take amitriptyline?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients.

## What should I do if I run out of tablets?

Try not to run out. Make sure you order more tablets from your vet if your supply is getting low. If you do run out, contact your own vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

## What should I do if I miss a dose?

If a dose is missed, give the medication as soon as possible. However, it is best to skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your pet's next scheduled dose. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the total stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

## What should I do if my pet is accidentally given too many doses?

**Contact your vet immediately** as an overdose of amitriptyline can potentially be fatal.

## Can my pet take amitriptyline if I am already giving them other drugs?

Tell your vet if you are giving your pet any other medications, even if you think they already know. This includes herbal or off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop, pharmacy or health store. Do not give amitriptyline to your pet if they are already taking a type of antidepressant called a monoamine oxidase inhibitor, or chlorphenamine (an antihistamine), cimetidine (used to prevent or treat stomach ulcers) or tramadol (a pain-relieving drug). If you have any questions about this drug or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about amantadine.

## What are the possible side effects of amitriptyline for my pet?

Cats, in particular, may foam and froth at the mouth when the tablet is given. Amitriptyline may cause some drowsiness, intestinal problems (constipation, or diarrhoea and vomiting) and odd behaviour. Other side effects seen in people but not yet reported in dogs and cats are increased appetite, weight gain, fainting (due to a change in heart rate) and, very rarely, seizures (fits). If your pet shows any unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet.

## What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking amitriptyline?

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, you should not give any further doses and should contact your vet as soon as possible for advice.

## The Prescribing Cascade

This medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is used by vets under the 'prescribing cascade'. The medicine is not authorized by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for use in dogs/cats/pets. Your vet can explain the 'prescribing cascade' in further detail to you and also explain why they are prescribing this drug for your pet. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you understand the reasons that the drug is being prescribed and its possible complications, before the treatment is issued.

While the editors and the BSAVA have made every effort in preparing this information leaflet, the contents and any statements are made in good faith purely for general guidance and cannot be regarded as substitute for professional advice. The publishers, contributors and the BSAVA do not take responsibility for the information provided on this leaflet and hence do not accept any liability for loss or expense incurred (by you or persons that you disseminate the materials to) as a result of relying on content in this leaflet. To this end, you are advised to consult your vet and seek their professional advice before taking any steps set out in this leaflet. If you are a vet, you must not rely on the contents in this leaflet without independently verifying the correctness and veracity of the contents. BSAVA is not responsible for any alterations made to this document from the version supplied.

### **What should I do if a person accidentally takes this drug?**

If a person accidentally takes your pet's tablets, the person should be taken to the local hospital **immediately**. Take this leaflet and any remaining tablets plus their container (even if it is empty) with you.

### **Whom do I contact if I want to know more?**

If you have any questions about this drug, or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about amitriptyline.